



M E D I A R E L E A S E

STATE OF TENNESSEE
DEPARTMENT OF HUMAN SERVICES

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
APRIL 28, 2014

CONTACT: DEVIN STONE
615.313.4707 (OFFICE)
DEVIN.STONE@TN.GOV

FARMERS' MARKET EVENT INCREASES SNAP RECIPIENT ACCESS TO TENNESSEE FARM PRODUCTS

Nashville, Tenn., April 28, 2014 – Farmers and farmers' markets across the state today increased their reach to the more than 1.3 million Tennesseans participating in the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program, or SNAP, formerly known as Food Stamps.

Today, the Tennessee Department of Human Services, the Tennessee Department of Agriculture and the USDA's Food and Nutrition Service hosted the Farmers' Market On-Site Application and Approval Event for those interested in receiving free wireless point-of-sale (POS) devices equipped to accept SNAP benefits. Through this event, eligible participants were also able to receive approval to process SNAP transactions within the day, versus the normal processing timeframe.

Last year, SNAP recipients spent an average of \$175 million in benefits per month. With the new increase of farmers and farmers' markets able to accept the benefit, more Tennessee households can have access to fresh, healthy and nutritious foods. This is especially opportune for rural communities in which farms have often been a staple but grocery stores may be scarce.

"Given the many rural communities in Tennessee, expanding the opportunity for families receiving SNAP to access food is vital," said DHS Commissioner Raquel Hatter. "Enlisting farmers and farmers' markets can help to alleviate the issue, while placing fresh, nutritious foods on the table for many families."

Individual farmers and farmers' markets that were unable to attend the event can contact the Department of Human Services to find out if they qualify for federal grants for free wireless point-of-sale equipment and internet access. Or, they can visit the new [MarketLinkTM](#) website as an additional way to become an authorized SNAP vendor and get the equipment needed to accept SNAP benefits.

The USDA Food and Nutrition Service works to improve childhood nutrition and empower families to make healthier food choices by expanding the availability of healthy food and offering tools to help in the process. This effort is supported when farmers and farmers' markets accept SNAP.

"Today, of the nearly 8,000 farmers' markets in the United States, about half accept SNAP payments," said FNS Southeast Deputy Regional Administrator Erin Swanson-Hall. "At the same time, many SNAP recipients, especially in urban areas, are unaware that their SNAP EBT cards can be used to purchase fresh products directly from authorized farmers or farmers' markets. We're working to change that."

- more -

CITIZENS PLAZA, 15TH FLOOR
400 DEADERICK STREET
NASHVILLE, TN 37243
615.313.4700

For more information on how to become a SNAP authorized farm or farmers' market and receive wireless EBT equipment, please visit www.fns.usda.gov/ebt/learn-about-snap-benefits-farmers-markets, www.marketlink.org, or contact Loleetha Gilbert, Loleetha.Gilbert@tn.gov, (615)313-5276.

###